



**School Improvement Fund
State Application
Section 1003 (g)
Federal FY 2007**

**Georgia Department of Education
School Improvement Fund
Section 1003(g)**

CFDA # 84.377A

Specific Application Contents

Part A – Funds Retained by the SEA

Each SEA must:

1. Identify the amount of funds the SEA will retain from section 1003(g) and 1003(a) for State-level activities.
Georgia's application is for the full allocation of \$3,975,771 to be used at the state and local levels as outlined in the application. Five percent of the allocation (\$198,788.55) will be retained at the state level for administration, evaluation, and technical assistance.
2. Describe the SEA's current statewide system of support required under section 1117 and how the SEA will use funds available to the SEA under section 1003(g) and 1003(a) to build capacity at the LEA and school levels to improve student achievement.

Georgia's statewide system of support provides school improvement services to all schools and local education agencies (LEAs) through regional support teams. These teams are comprised of a cadre of former superintendents, principals, and teachers with expertise in school leadership, curriculum, instruction, continuous school improvement, and specific academic content areas such as mathematics. In addition, regional support teams may request the services of outside experts based on the needs of individual schools.

Georgia delivers statewide support through five (5) school improvement regions. Each region has a support team comprised of up to five (5) system leaders. Each system leader is assigned up to 10 LEAs. The system leader is responsible for providing professional learning, continuous school improvement planning based on *Georgia School Standards*, and student data unique to each LEA. In addition to system leaders, each region is assigned a leadership facilitator whose primary responsibility is to provide professional learning in mathematics curriculum and instruction. A second leadership facilitator is focused on coordinating the work of and supporting programs for at-risk students. System leaders also work in collaboration with Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) school improvement specialists to support Title I schools that are identified for improvement and schools that did not make AYP for one year.

In addition to regional leadership facilitators, the GaDOE also employs school-level leadership facilitators. These facilitators are assigned to improvement, corrective action, and restructuring schools and provide on-site support. The level of services provided to schools depends on the number of years a school has been identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring.

For schools identified for corrective action, a school-level leadership facilitator is assigned to work with administrators and school building-level leadership teams one day per week.

School-level leadership facilitators provide guidance in developing continuous school improvement plans using the tools and resources developed by the GaDOE. Also, they provide professional learning on data utilization, conduct classroom observations, model classroom instruction, and conduct awareness walks designed to collect formative data on classroom practices. In addition, they serve as the lead on collaborative school teams established to analyze data and redesign instruction based on data.

Schools identified for restructuring receive a more intense level of support. A school-level leadership facilitator is assigned to provide on-site support to schools two days per week, and these schools are required to enter into a contract with the Georgia State Board of Education to meet specific improvement strategies outlined in the contract. Another on-site support expert is the contract monitor. Contract monitors are responsible for monitoring the school's progress toward meeting contract milestones.

In addition, schools identified for restructuring receive a mandatory GAPSS. *Georgia Assessment of Performance on School Standards* (GAPSS) is a formalized process to assess a school's implementation of Georgia schools standards. *Georgia School Standards* defines the eight strands for effective schools—curriculum, assessment, instruction, planning and organization, parent and community involvement, professional learning, leadership, and school culture. Rubrics to assess the school's level of implementation are included for each standard to help each school identify its current performance in relation to the standard, identifying strengths and determining areas for growth. In order to ensure that schools have instructional tools to address areas for improvement, members of the school staff must participate in "Raising Standards", a GaDOE developed professional learning program that provides processes and strategies for teaching mathematics and English/language arts and science in a standards-based classroom.

On October 11, 2007, the Georgia State Board of Education approved Title I School Improvement Grants (1003 (a) funds) to LEAs on behalf of Title I schools identified for improvement, corrective action, and restructuring. These grants assist schools as they develop plans and implement strategies to improve student achievement. The funds are for the specific purpose to support improved student achievement in the target areas and subgroups identified on the AYP report.

Grant amounts were determined on the basis of the formula outlined in the table below.

Years in Needs Improvement	Base Amount per Grant	Enrollment Supplement per Grant 601-1,000 Students	Enrollment Supplement per Grant >1,000 Students
NI 1, 2	\$32,000	\$5,000	\$10,000
NI 3	\$52,000	\$5,000	\$10,000
NI 4-6	\$82,000	\$5,000	\$10,000
NI 7-9	\$127,000	\$5,000	\$10,000

In addition, Title I Needs Improvement Schools that have been identified as Contract-Monitored Schools (restructuring) received an additional \$27,500 to assist in implementing the GaDOE's "Raising Standards" initiative. Participation in the Raising Standards Initiative is a requirement of the Contract-Monitored Schools' Improvement Contract.

Currently, the GaDOE has system- and school-level support for schools identified for improvement, corrective action, and restructuring. However, there is a gap in support for specific oversight of school leadership teams. At least 14 of the possible 25 contract-monitored school principals are in their first two years as a principal. Due to the administrative inexperience of these principals, the GaDOE will require each school to use its 1003(g) funds to hire a GaDOE-approved state administrator. The state administrator will provide the school leadership team daily access to an expert who has a proven track-record in continuous improvement for low-performing schools. In addition, each school identified for restructuring must participate in a summer leadership training program designed to increase skills in leveraging financial resources, designing school schedules to increase effective instructional time, and providing training to strengthen the instructional skills of the leadership team.

3. From the strategies on page 3, describe the school improvement strategy or strategies the SEA will implement with section 1003(g) and 1003(a) funds, including a brief explanation of why each strategy was selected.

Through research and the utilization of data analysis, Georgia has developed a tiered statewide system of support at the state, regional, system, and school levels. The support focuses on building system and school capacity to improve student achievement and move schools out of improvement. Georgia's current system of support includes implementing components from each of the strategies listed below.

Strategy#1: Provide customized technical assistance and/or professional development that is designed to build the capacity of the LEA and school staff to improve schools and is informed by student achievement and other outcome-related measures.

Rationale: Georgia's current system of support is targeted at creating a systematic process for the school staff to problem solve and make data driven decisions directly impacting increased student achievement. Through the utilization of job-embedded professional development, the LEA and school staff are introduced to research-based strategies focused on extending knowledge of curriculum; instruction; assessment; planning and organization; student, family, and community involvement; professional learning; leadership; and school culture. Additionally, the current system of support provides guidance on developing leadership teams, developing plans with action and measurable goals, standards-based classrooms, and pyramids of intervention. The guidance and support are provided through experienced individuals at the state, regional, system and school levels. Print and web-based resources are made available statewide.

Strategy #2: Utilize research-based strategies or practices to change instructional practice to address the academic achievement problems that cause the school to be identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring.

Rationale: The current system of support is focused on building system and school capacity to design and implement teaching, learning, and assessment tasks and activities to ensure that all students achieve proficiency relative to the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS). Specific GPS content Learning Frameworks are provided statewide that align the curriculum, assessment, and instruction and can be utilized to plan quality teaching and learning. Leadership facilitators and system leaders provide support to system and school leadership

teams and assist with professional learning in data-driven instruction, collaborative planning, differentiated learning, instructional grouping practices, student work analysis, and providing appropriate feedback.

Strategy #3: Create partnerships among the SEA, LEAs, and other entities for the purpose of delivering technical assistance, professional development, and management advice.

Rationale: The current statewide system of support has been developed to utilize the expertise and resources from all education agencies in Georgia. Georgia's school superintendent leads the Alliance of Education Agency Heads comprised of the Georgia Department of Education, Governor's Office of Student Achievement, Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, Department of Adult and Technical Education, Professional Standards Commission, Georgia Student Finance Commission, and the Department of Early Learning. The Alliance has identified five common goals to provide a statewide plan for increased student achievement birth through post-secondary. One of the five goals addresses statewide school improvement.

Additionally, in conjunction with the LEA, the Georgia Department of Education partners with 16 Regional Educational Service Agencies (RESA), Georgia Learning Resources System (GLRS), Educational Technology Training Centers (ETTC), Georgia Leadership Institute for School Improvement (GLISI), universities and colleges to provide technical assistance, professional development, and management advice. The partners listed above meet throughout the year for four statewide meetings and six regional meetings to align, communicate, coordinate, and collaborate the professional learning and technical assistance provided to systems and schools.

Strategy #4: Provide professional development to enhance the capacity of school support team members and other technical assistance providers who are part of the statewide system of support and that is informed by student achievement and other outcome-related measures.

Rationale: Currently the partners listed in strategy #3 meet throughout the year for four statewide meetings and six regional meetings to align, communicate, coordinate, and collaborate the professional learning and technical assistance provided to systems and schools. Partners share data, action plans, and strategies to ensure aligned work and to create a common language that can be translated to LEAs and schools.

The four school improvement strategies listed above provide the basis for Georgia's current statewide system of support. The Georgia School Standards are based on the thirty-five year meta-analysis that is outlined in What Works in Schools: Translating Research Into Action (Dr. Robert Marzano, ASCD, 2003). The current support teams (leadership facilitators, system leaders, etc.) guide systems and schools to examine what is being done at the school-level in terms of ensuring a guaranteed and viable curriculum, challenging and effective feedback, classroom curriculum design, instructional strategies at the classroom level, student engagement, parent and community involvement, safe and orderly environment, collegiality and professionalism, and classroom management.

Georgia has elected to use its 1003 (g) funds to implement strategy #2.

Rationale: In School Leadership that Works: From Research to Results, Marzano, Waters, and McNulty discuss the role and importance of an effective leadership team in guiding the work of a school to improve student achievement. Providing schools with daily technical assistance, with the development and use of a leadership team to guide the decision-making and planning of the school, will help to ensure higher levels of student achievement. By providing focused and aligned training and support to schools through a State administrator, the school leadership will have the opportunity to become proficient in implementing and monitoring Georgia's school standards. This level of proficiency will ensure the establishment of a school culture that is focused on sustainable school improvement processes that result in increased student achievement for all students.

Part B – Funds Awarded to LEAs

Each SEA must describe:

1. How the SEA will allocate at least 95 percent of its section 1003(g) and 1003(a) funds, either separately or combined, to LEAs¹. In its description, the SEA must address the following statutory provisions:
 - The criteria the SEA will use to give priority to LEAs with the lowest-achieving schools that demonstrate—
 - The greatest need for these funds, and
 - The strongest commitment to ensuring that the funds are used to provide adequate resources for the lowest-achieving schools to meet the goals for improvement under section 1116.
 - How the SEA will define “greatest need” and “strongest commitment.”

Georgia will allocate at least 95% of its 1003(g) funds on a formula basis, separately from 1003(a) funds.

Georgia will use the following criteria to give priority to LEAs with the lowest-achieving schools that demonstrate the greatest needs

- The LEA must have a school or schools identified for restructuring;
- The LEA must have a GaDOE approved restructuring plan for each school;
- The LEA must have a GaDOE approved budget for 1003(a) funds.

The following criteria will be used to demonstrate the strongest commitment,

- The LEA must have a track record of working collaboratively with leadership facilitators assigned to schools;
- The LEA must ensure that appropriate school-level staff have attended “Raising Standards” training; and
- The LEA must have a signed contract (on behalf of its schools identified for restructuring) with the Georgia State Board of Education to implement specific

¹ An SEA may, with the approval of the LEA, directly provide for one or more of the school improvement strategies listed above or to arrange for their provision through other entities such as school support teams or educational service agencies.

strategies to improve student achievement. The improvement contract requires LEAs and schools to commit to the following:

- Use online performance tasks based on Georgia Performance Standards
 - Use benchmark assessments
 - Attend training specified by the GaDOE
 - Implement and monitor instructional strategies through Raising Standards Academies for general education teachers, special education teachers, instructional coaches, and administrators
 - Hire instructional coaches
 - Develop and use short-term action plans
 - Develop School Leadership Team
 - Monitor and analyze teacher attendance data
 - Monitor and analyze student attendance data
 - Identify and work with students at risk of not graduating on time
 - Participate in a GAPSS Analysis
- With respect to section 1003(g) funds (if allocated separately from 1003(a) funds), the criteria the SEA will use to determine grant award amounts to LEAs to ensure that each grant—
- Is of sufficient size and scope to support the activities required under sections 1116 and 1117, and
 - Is not less than \$50,000 or more than \$500,000 for each participating school.

95% of the 1003(f) funds will be allocated to LEAs on a formula basis. The grant amount per school is \$151,079 within the LEA identified for restructuring. This amount is sufficient to cover the cost for capacity building at the school level and to support implementation of the strategies identified in question #3. This amount is greater than the \$50,000 minimum requirement and less than the \$500,000 maximum amount. In addition, this amount will cover the cost of travel-related expenses for school-level leadership team training provided by the GaDOE as well as the hiring of a school-level state administrator. The state administrator will provide daily on-site assistance and guidance to the principal and school leadership team. Assistance will impact budgeting, scheduling, data analysis, and best instructional practices implementation.

- How funds will be integrated with other funds awarded by the SEA under the ESEA.

Each school identified for restructuring has developed a plan complete with strategies that focus on the individual school's student achievement needs. Funds available to each school from all sources have been aligned to the specific strategies. Title I schoolwide schools are consolidating ESEA funds to upgrade the entire educational system of the school. Title I targeted assistance schools will align ESEA funds to support students identified using multiple criteria and to provide professional learning for teachers. In addition, each school has developed a GaDOE-approved implementation plan that aligns all funding available to the school to implement specific strategies.

- Whether, assuming section 1003(g) funds are appropriated in subsequent years, the SEA will renew an LEA's grant for up to two additional one-year periods if schools in the LEA are meeting the goals for improvement under section 1116. Georgia will renew LEAs grants up to two additional one-year periods provided schools have shown student achievement progress toward meeting annual measurable objective and have met contract milestones.
- 2. The local application provisions the SEA will require its LEAs to address to ensure that—
 - a. LEAs will use funds under section 1003(g) and 1003(a) to implement one or more of the school improvement strategies previously listed and that decisions about the strategy or strategies selected are based on data; and
 - b. The school improvement strategies supported with these funds contribute to achieving the annual measurable objectives in school improvement plans [§1116(b)(3)(v)], or to achieving the goals necessary for schools to exit corrective action and restructuring status, as appropriate.

The GaDOE in collaboration with LEAs have analyzed student achievement data and have determined areas for improvement. LEAs have agreed to the terms of the contract for their schools identified for restructuring. As mentioned earlier each school is required to have a GAPSS analysis. Through the GAPSS analysis, areas of improvement in curriculum, assessment, instruction, leadership, and professional development are identified. The results of the data analysis afford schools the opportunity to address specific issues.

Strategy #2 allows GaDOE in collaboration with LEAs to intensify the support and leverage resources. Therefore, each application will include assurances that the LEA will implement Strategy #2 and assure that funds will be used only for the purpose of implementing strategies likely to assist the schools in exiting restructuring.

- 3. How the SEA will assess the effectiveness of school improvement activities and disseminate information on what works to other LEAs in the State.

The GaDOE in collaboration with the LEA will assess school improvement activities in two ways:

- 1. Analyze formative assessment data. Formative assessment data is collected from Georgia benchmark assessments.
- 2. Analyze summative assessment data. Summative assessment data is collected from Georgia's criterion-referenced tests.

Through Georgia's continuous school improvement efforts, successful practices are identified and shared through state, regional, and local education agencies. In addition, effective practices are included in "Raising Standards" training, newsletters, conferences, and workshops.

Part C – Monitoring

Each SEA must describe how it will monitor the effectiveness of the strategies selected and implemented with funds from section 1003(g) and 1003(a) and the steps the SEA will take if the school improvement strategies supported with these funds are not contributing to increased student achievement.

The GaDOE has employed and assigned contract monitors and leadership facilitators whose primary responsibility is to ensure that schools identified for restructuring are on target to meet contract milestones. In addition to the contract, schools identified for restructuring also are required to develop and implement 45-day action plans. This allows targeted and frequent monitoring of progress.

Georgia's statewide system of support includes measures to address LEAs and schools identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring that are not on target to meet student achievement goals. Schools that do not meet student achievement goals specified in the improvement contract are subject to a referral to the Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA). The GOSA works to increase student achievement through the analysis and communication of statewide education data. It reports such information meaningfully, objectively, and straightforwardly to stakeholders. In addition, GOSA uses this data to provide education policy support to the Governor.

GOSA Roles and Responsibilities

- Adopt uniform definitions for "dropout" and "below grade level".
- Create a statewide accountability program that is performance-based and disaggregated for grades kindergarten through 12.
- Establish levels of performance for schools considered to be satisfactory on each assessment administered by the Georgia Department of Education.
- Review the performance of each school, and establish individual school ratings for each school in Georgia for annual academic performance on the assessment instruments.
- Develop an accountability analysis and reporting program [report card] that compares national results and benchmarks for the subject areas and grade levels for which criterion-referenced and nationally normed reference assessment instruments are adopted, and compare such results.
- Develop an audit program and determine the frequency of on-site audits according to annual comprehensive analyses of student performance and equity in relation to the academic excellence indicators and fund accounting assessments.
- Develop a financial awards system to recognize those schools and school systems that demonstrate progress or success in achieving the education goals of the state and achieve excellence on GOSA's school rating system.
- Develop performance measures and indicators that provide the basis of an accountability report card on the University System of Georgia, the Department of Technical and Adult Education, the Professional Standards Commission, and Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL).